

# OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHAT KI TISA - PARA · 20 ADAR 5767 · MAR. 10, 2007 · VOL. 14 NO. 21

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### THE SPICE OF LIFE

“...five hundred shekel-weight of pure myrrh...” (30:23)

One of the most misunderstood concepts in Judaism is *tzniut*. Insufficiently mistranslated as “modesty,” *tzniut* is often taken to apply solely to the height of hems and the depth of necklines, but *tzniut* involves much more than clothing.

Cruising the block in a wild set of wheels at an easy pace, or sporting a diamond ring that looks like it should never have been let out of the Brinks van, is no more *tznua* than an over-revealing dress.

*Tzniut* really would be better translated as ‘hiddenness’.

In this week’s parsha, the Torah lists the formulation of spices in the anointment oil and the *ketoret* (incense). The first of the ingredients was *mor dror* – pure myrrh. The Talmud teaches that myrrh is an allusion to Mordechai, for the Aramaic translation of *mor dror* is *mora dachia* – Mordechai.

What is the connection of the *ketoret* to Mordechai and to Purim?

The more precious something is, the more it needs to be hidden. To the best of my knowledge, Fort Knox has never given guided tours of its facility (nor free gifts at the end of the tour).

The holier something is the more it needs to be hidden. The climax of the service of Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year, was the burning of the *ketoret* in the Holy of Holies, the holiest place in the world. That central event took place in total seclusion. And even when the

*ketoret* was burned during the rest of the year in the *Heichal* (Sanctuary), the *kohanim* would leave so that it could be burned in private.

Mordechai’s name hints to myrrh, because his great strength was inconspicuousness. Because of the *tzniut* of Mordechai and Esther, the Jews of Persia were spared. When Mordechai discovered a plot against the king, he didn’t take the credit for uncovering the conspiracy; rather he gave the information to Esther for her to reveal. It was Esther herself who decided to divulge that Mordechai was responsible for saving the king.

The story of Purim is a story of hidden-ness. Esther’s name means ‘hidden’. When Esther was chosen to be queen, rather than trumpeting her lineage, she hid her Jewish identity.

The very name of the book that relates the events of Purim — Megillat Esther — means “to reveal that which is hidden.”

We live in a world where G-d has chosen to hide Himself almost totally.

“Where was G-d?” is the question so many ask when confounded by the events of recent history.

At the time of Mordechai and Esther, the question could also have been asked, “Where is G-d?”

It was Mordechai and Esther’s inconspicuousness, their *tzniut*, that caused G-d’s hidden Hand to be revealed.

When G-d acts with hiddenness, the only way we have to discern His Presence and to reveal Him in the world is to behave with hiddenness, with inconspicuousness and with modesty.

• Sources: Maharal, Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe

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## PARSHA OVERVIEW

**M**oshe conducts a census by counting each silver half-shekel donated by all men age twenty and over. Moshe is commanded to make a copper laver for the Mishkan. The women donate the necessary metal. The formula of the anointing oil is specified, and G-d instructs Moshe to use this oil only for dedicating the Mishkan, its vessels, Aharon and his sons. G-d selects Betzalel and Oholiav as master craftsmen for the Mishkan and its vessels. The Jewish People are commanded to keep the Sabbath as an eternal sign that G-d made the world. Moshe receives the two Tablets of Testimony on which are written the Ten Commandments. The mixed multitude who left Egypt with the Jewish People panic when Moshe's descent seems delayed, and force Aharon to make a golden calf for them to worship. Aharon stalls, trying to delay them. G-d tells Moshe to return to the people immediately,

threatening to destroy everyone and build a new nation from Moshe. When Moshe sees the camp of idol-worship he smashes the tablets and destroys the golden calf. The sons of Levi volunteer to punish the transgressors, executing 3,000 men. Moshe ascends the mountain to pray for forgiveness for the people, and G-d accepts his prayer. Moshe sets up the Mishkan and G-d's cloud of glory returns. Moshe asks G-d to show him the rules by which he conducts the world, but is granted only a small portion of this request. G-d tells Moshe to hew new tablets and reveals to him the text of the prayer that will invoke Divine mercy. Idol worship, intermarriage and the combination of milk and meat are prohibited. The laws of Pesach, the first-born, the first-fruits, Shabbat, Shavuot and Succot are taught. When Moshe descends with the second set of tablets, his face is luminous as a result of contact with the Divine.

## ISRAEL Forever

### GETTING READY FOR PESACH IN MORE THAN ONE WAY

**W**hen Jews had an opportunity to offer a *korban Pesach* — a Passover sacrifice — in the time of the *Beit Hamikdash*, they had to ensure that they were qualified to do so. If anyone had been in contact with a dead body, which rendered him spiritually impure, he had to undergo a purification process utilizing the ashes of the *para aduma* — the red heifer.

This is why on the Shabbat following Purim we read the *maftir* called *Parshat Para* to remind us that when the opportunity will come to once again offer a Pesach sacrifice, we must prepare ourselves through purification.

One of the ways that Jews traditionally prepare themselves today for celebrating Pesach as the festival of freedom is to help free needy Jews from the burden of poverty that prevents them from properly celebrating this great holiday. Just as we read in this week's Torah portion of the outpouring of silver half-shekel coins for building the *Mishkan* Sanctuary, so too do we proudly see Jews today generously contributing to the *Maot Chittin* and *Kimcha da'Pischa* funds to help the needy prepare for Pesach.

This is the wonderful spirit of charity that protects Israel forever.

## LOVE OF THE LAND - THE PLACES

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

### A BUILDING FOR THE HEREAFTER

“I bought this building so that when Mashiach comes, and we have a revival of the dead, I will have a home in Jerusalem. And so, I want the building to remain in our possession.”

Thus wrote a Turkish rabbi over 400 years



ago in his will in regard to a building he had purchased in what is now known as the Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem and is adjacent to a church. Two hundred years ago there was family litigation about this property and the will was cited as proof of the family's ownership that is intact to this very day.

## PARSHA Q&A ?

1. How many “geira” are in a shekel?
2. What was the minimum age of military service in the Jewish army?
3. What were the three different types of *terumah* donated?
4. The Jews were counted after Yom Kippur and again after Pesach. Both times they numbered the same amount. How can this be? Didn't some 19-year olds turn 20 during that six month period?
5. How many ingredients comprise the incense of the *Mishkan*?
6. According to Rashi, why are sailors called “malachim”?
7. What is the difference between *chochma* (wisdom), *bina* (understanding), and *da'at* (knowledge)?
8. Shabbat is a “sign.” What does it signify?
9. When did the Jewish People begin to give contributions for the building of the *Mishkan*?
10. How many books are there in Tanach?
11. From where did the men take the earrings that they donated to make the calf?
12. Why did Aharon build the altar for the golden calf by himself?
13. Why did Moshe break the Tablets?
14. How can two brothers belong to two different tribes?
15. Why did Moshe ask that his name be erased from the Torah?
16. How has the sin of the golden calf affected the Jewish People throughout history?
17. In verse 33:2, G-d says that the inhabitants of *Eretz Canaan* would be driven out of the Land. In that verse, only six of the seven Canaanite nations are mentioned. What happened to the seventh?
18. How did G-d show that He forgave the Jewish People?
19. How did Moshe become wealthy?
20. How do the light rays shining from Moshe's face show us the powerful effect of sin?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to this Week's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 30:13 - Twenty.
2. 30:14 - Twenty.
3. 30:15 - For the *adanim* (sockets), for the purchase of communal sacrifices, and for the building of the *Mishkan*.
4. 30:16 - Their ages were calculated based on Rosh Hashana, not based on their individual birthdays.
5. 30:34 - Eleven ingredients were used making the incense.
6. 30:35 - Because they stir (*malach*) the water with their oars.
7. 31:3 - *Chochma* is knowledge acquired from others. *Bina* is the deduction of new knowledge from what one has already learned. *Da'at* is holy inspiration.
8. 31:13 - It is a sign between G-d and the Jewish People that He has chosen them and a sign to the nations of the world that He has sanctified the Jewish People.
9. 31:18 - The 11th of Tishrei.
10. 31:18 - 24.
11. 32:2,3 - From their ears.
12. 32:5 - He hoped that by building it by himself it would take longer and in the interim Moshe would return.
13. 32:19 - Moshe reasoned: If the Torah forbids those who have estranged themselves from the Torah to partake in even a single commandment (Pesach sacrifice), surely the entire Torah cannot be given to a whole nation which has estranged itself from G-d!
14. 32:27 - Half-brothers, sharing the same mother.
15. 32:32 - So people shouldn't say “Moshe was unworthy to plead for mercy on behalf of the Jewish people.”
16. 32:34 - Whenever G-d punishes the Jewish People, part of that punishment comes as payment for the sin of the golden calf.
17. 33:2 - The seventh nation, the Girgashites, voluntarily emigrated.
18. 33:14 - He agreed to let His *Shechina* dwell among them.
19. 34:1 - Moshe carved the Tablets out of precious stone. G-d commanded Moshe to keep the leftover fragments.
20. 34:35 - Before the sin of the golden calf, the people would not have been afraid to look at the light rays, but after the sin they were afraid.

- Watering fields on Chol Hamoed and in Shmitah year
- Weeding or watering on Shabbat – which category of violation
- Plowing in regard to *kilayim* and Shmitah
- Agricultural labors in Shmitah forbidden by Torah or rabbinic law
- How much before Shmitah year must such labors cease
- Different sources of water in regard to irrigating field
- Digging water channels and clearing debris from them and from public cisterns
- Marking graves to warn against spiritual contamination
- The status of fields with lost or plowed graves
- When investigation of *kilayim* growth is made and what is done to offenders
- Watering trees and sprinkling gardens
- Trapping and killing rodents in orchards or grain fields
- Closing gaps in walls of fields and courtyards
- Dealing with the *metzora* (leper) on Chol Hamoed
- Whose company is more important to the *metzora*
- Requirements for a *kohen* ruling on status of *metzora*
- Conflict between mourning dead and celebrating holiday
- What may be done in regard to burial and preparations
- Reasons for ban on marrying on Chol Hamoed

## DOUBLE TROUBLE

Can a person be held responsible for two simultaneous violations? Should one prune a tree on Shabbat in order to make use of its branches, states Rabbi Cahana, he is guilty of two violations. By detaching any growth from its source he has performed one of the 39 categories of creative labor prohibited on Shabbat. In addition, his removing surplus branches will make the tree grow better so he is also guilty of promoting agricultural growth akin to planting.

In regard to Shabbat itself, when the punishment for willful violation is capital punishment, the only application of this “double trouble” is the need to bring two sins offerings as sacrifices if he did this pruning as an involuntary desecration of Shabbat. But if he did this voluntarily on Yom Tov or in the Shmitah year, he will be liable for two sets of lashes.

This seems to run counter to the rule which is often found in the Talmud that one cannot be held responsible for two violations committed simultaneously and only the severer punishment is applied.

Tosefot solves the problem by pointing out that this rule applies only when the punishments are of a different scale, such as a penalty of death and a penalty of lashes. In a case where the penalties are of the same level such as lashes for doing the above-mentioned pruning on a holiday or during the Shmitah year, this rule does not apply because we view the two penalties of lashes as a single unit.

An example of this cited by Tosefot is the ruling by the Sage Abaye (*Pesachim* 24a) that one can be guilty of four violations — and punished by four sets of lashes — for consuming a particular insect which is forbidden by the Torah under four different categories.

• *Mo'ed Katan* 2b

## WHAT THE SAGES SAY

“One should not marry on Chol Hamoed because one should focus on the joy of the holiday alone and not mix it with another sort of joy.”

• Rabbi Elazar quoting Rabbi Chanina in explanation of the Mishneh (*Mo'ed Katan* 8b)

## JEWISH GIBBERISH? BABBLE ON!

From: Sarah J.

Dear Rabbi,  
I have a question. I was born into a family with a religious Christian father and a not so religious Jewish mother. Of course my mother taught me to follow Judaism and to only “help” my father celebrate Christmas, etc. When they were still together, my dad would teach us about Jesus, but my mom told him to stop. Now that they are separated, my mother has no control over telling him to stop. This past weekend, my sister started to speak in tongues. My thought was, “Well I guess Jessica’s not Jewish anymore.” Can you please tell me what Jewish people think of praying in tongues? Do we believe in this language? Is it not acceptable for a Jewish person to pray in this language? Thank you.

Dear Sarah J.,

On the one hand, I empathize with the difficulties you must be going through as a result of your parents’ separation. On the other hand, as you know, Judaism prohibits intermarriage, and the situation you describe is an unfortunately all too common outcome where children are torn between two religions, torn between loyalty to two parents, and ultimately torn by the turmoil of separation and divorce.

Regarding the effect of speaking in tongues on your sister’s Judaism, you should know that a person born to a Jewish woman is always Jewish. No matter what they do or believe, and even if they outright convert to another religion, that person will always be Jewish in essence. You should find some way to convey this to your sister, and never give up hope that she will some day, some way return to following the ways of Judaism.

As far as the general question of Judaism’s approach to speaking in tongues is concerned, let’s first clarify what

we’re talking about. There are two basic types: when a person speaks unintelligible sounds in a state of religious ecstasy, or when a person speaks a real language which he himself doesn’t understand, but which is understood by people who know that language. The first type is what is found among some segments of certain denominations of Christianity such as the Pentecostals.

While there seems to be references to speaking in tongues in Christian sources (although many are forced interpretations or outright additions not found in the ancient Greek version), there is no reference to speaking in tongues anywhere in *Tanach*, the Jewish Bible. There are only some remotely similar, but markedly different, instances.

For one, recall the well-known story of the Tower of Babel, where the people’s tongues were confused such that people spoke languages that others didn’t understand. However, this is not comparable because each spoke an actual language, not unintelligible sounds, where it was the speaker who understood and the listeners who did not. Also, far from expressing spiritual enlightenment, their “babel-ing” was a punishment for brazenly challenging G-d, which resulted in discord and dispersal.

In another instance, our sources teach that when G-d gave the Torah to the Jewish people in Hebrew, he simultaneously gave it in the seventy languages of the ancient non-Jewish nations (listed in Gen. ch. 10). This was in order that the truth of the Torah be accessible to all mankind. But this is also different since here, G-d — who understands all languages — spoke intelligibly to those who understand that particular language. In fact, in Jewish sources, we always find that when G-d speaks through a pure and genuinely inspired person, the language and message is clear, for the benefit of both the speaker and listener alike — and not just gibberish understood by none.

So to answer the question: Does Judaism accept gibberish? Babel on!

## THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

### HUNGARIANS AND ENGLISHMEN

How does one go about choosing families for a new kollel in Hungary? This is how Michael Flax, a young professional from England who has established the Torah Academy in Budapest, put it:

“The goal of this project is Jewish continuity and reaching out to the 100,000 Jews of Hungary. I interviewed

over 20 families from different origins and decided to bring English families because the English are more reserved... similar to the Hungarians.”

It will be interesting to see what many Englishmen and Hungarians have to say about this comparison!

## “SHOOTING” AT THE KOTEL

**Question:** On a recent visit to the Western Wall in Jerusalem I was anxious to photograph a particular person who seemed to fit in so well with the sacred wall as a background. He signaled to me, however, that he objected to my doing so. What is the right thing to do?

**Answer:** You certainly should respect the refusal of someone to be photographed and to refrain from attempting to do so surreptitiously.

The reason for his objection may be on metaphysical grounds or simply because he desires privacy. Whatever his reason it is certainly not fair to ignore it.

While we are on the subject of cameras at the Kotel, it should be mentioned that the modern culture of “Harry, shoot me at the Kotel” transforms this holy site into some sort of tourist attraction that must be photographed rather than a serious place of prayer.

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